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Burmese AP4

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THE VILLAGE SETTING AND THE PEOPLE

Tadagale is a suburban community of Lower Burma, about four and one half miles north of the city center of Rangoon, chief port and national capital of the Union of Burma. To reach the village most readily one travels by automobile northward from the city along Prome Road, a main highway, to the junction with Kokine Road, beyond the city limit, on to which one turns eastward. After a quarter mile or so, one again goes northward on to a bumpy, poorly surfaced road which soon becomes dirt and terminates abruptly, after another quarter mile, at a small bridge. Tadagale means 'small bridge,' and it is after this bridge that the village is named. A few steps walk over the bridge brings one almost to the center of Tadagale. (See map on following page.)

Tadagale is more or less a 'line' type village, about 3000 yards in length. The domestic dwelling area is constituted by houses and granaries strung along the sides of a main dirt path which is just wide enough for a single bullock cart — or a jeep — to pass without scraping the bushes and trees. This area is heavily shaded from the intense tropical sun by many trees that grow in the household compounds and along the path; palms and banyans are the most prominent types. The houses are rectangular in shape, with low, slanting roofs, and platform-like porches in front. Among the more prosperous families of the village it is not unusual to find houses of plank construction, with roofs of corrugated iron. More frequently, houses are made of bamboo matted sides and palm thatched roofs. Every two or three houses share a well, which is simply an unlined and uncovered hole of perhaps ten to twelve feet in depth. In almost every compound there is a vegetable garden, from which the family supplies itself and realizes some cash income by the sale of any surplus.

To the east of Tadagale's dwelling area, perhaps five hundred yards distant and running parallel to it, is a railroad line, which begins in Rangoon and terminates at Mingaladon, about five miles north of Tadagale. A small railroad station is located at the eastern terminus of the path on which one finds oneself immediately after crossing the bridge that leads into the village. The villagers do not use the railroad nearly so much as they use buses, which run from Tadagale to Rangoon frequently.

Beyond the railroad line, still farther east, lie the paddy fields, extending out to the winding Pasundaung Creek. This creek begins at the southeastern tip of Rangoon, where the Rangoon and Pegu rivers join, and flows in a twisting course northward to separate Rangoon and the heavily populated area immediately north of the city from the sparsely settled area to the east.

Tadagale's climate is that of the tropical monsoon belt, with three well-defined seasons. From the end of October to about the end of February is the Dry Season, characterized by the absence of rain, with cool mornings and evenings. The daily maximum temperature is in the 80's and the humidity is moderate. English-speaking Burmese call this season winter; at night it is cool enough to sleep under one light blanket. The Hot Season commences at the beginning of March and lasts until June. Temperatures rise to daily maxima in the middle to high 90's, the earth is parched and cracked, and the loose dirt on the village paths, caught by occasional breezes, forms choking